Black Leader Aided FBI Against King

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Washington—The FBI apparently worked with an unidentified black leader in its long undercover campaign to discredit the late Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., according to newly disclosed FBI documents.

The cooperation between the agency and the unidentified leader was disclosed in one of a series of memos from the "official and confidential" files of the late FBI director, J. Edgar Hoover. The Center for National Security Studies obtained them under the Freedom of Information Act and released them yesterday.

Senate investigators have previously revealed that the FBI's campaign against the civil rights leader included electronic surveillance of his hotel rooms, the release of information about his private life to various people and a proposal to groom a new "national Negro leader" to take his place.

The newly declassified FBI memo, dated Dec. 1, 1964, and addressed to the late FBI Assistant Director William C. Sullivan, alludes to a discussion the anonymous leader had had a few days earlier with another high-ranking FBI official, Cartha (Deke) DeLoach.

"(Deleted) stated to DeLoach that he was faced with the difficult problem of taking steps to remove King from the national picture," the FBI memo, written by FBI official J.A. Sizoo, said. "He indicates in his comments a lack of confidence that he, alone, could be successful."

As a consequence, the memo suggested DeLoach "have a further discussion with (deleted) in connection with the problem of the removal of King from the national scene." DeLoach, it was added, could also suggest that the anonymous leader might desire to call a meeting of black leaders in the country including, among others, civil rights leaders such as James Farmer and A. Philip Randolph as well as some prominent black judges, ministers and public officials.

". . . The bureau, on a highly confidential basis, could brief such a group on the security background of King . . . The use of a tape, such as contemplated in your memorandum, together with a transcript for convenience in following the tape should be most convincing," Sullivan was told in a sentence that was crossed out by pen or pencil. The allusion to the "tape" was evidently a reference to a recording made of conversations in King's FBI-bugged hotel rooms. The Senate Intelligence Committee was told in 1975 by former Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach that the electronic bugs had been placed without authorization.

The memo concluded by stating that those invited to such a meeting might then see "the danger of King to the overall civil rights movement."

"[Deleted] is already well aware of this," the FBI memo emphasized. "This group should include such leadership as would be capable of removing King from the scene if they, of their own volition, decided this was the thing to do after such a briefing. The group should include strong enough men to control a man like James Farmer and make him see the light of day. This might have the effect of increasing the stature of (deleted) who is a capable person and ambitious."

There is no indication the meeting of black leaders proposed in the FBI memo was ever held, but according to the Senate Intelligence Committee's 1976 report on the campaign to smear King, information "about Dr. King's private life" was made available at the time to various people, including reporters and Walter Jenkins, an aide to President Lyndon Johnson.